THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) At present, Bhopal is connected by the folliwing air services:—

*Alliance Air:*

— Delhi-Gwalior-Bhopal-Indore & return 2 flight/week
— Delhi-Indore-Bhopal & return 5 flight/week
— Mumbai-Indorc-Bhopal & return 5 flight/week
— Chennai-Nagpur-Bhopal & return2 flight/week (introduced w.e.f. 26.3.2000)

*Sahara Airlines:*

— Mumbai-Bhopal-Indore-Mumbai Daily
(introduced w.e.f. 3.2.2000)

(b) and (c) Airlines arc free to operate to any place in their commercial judgement subject to compliance with the Route Dispersal Guidelines which stipulate certain minimum operations on specified category of routes.

**Giga-Deal**

4587. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of news-item "Giga-Deal in trouble" which was published in India Today of March 27, 2000;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that the Sankhya Vahini project was never ever discussed by the full Telecom Commission before the Cabinet approval was accorded to it;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the DOT has finalised its policy of leasing out its optical fibre network;

(e) if so, the details thereof and whether adopting the MOU route instead of open bidding is in keeping with such policy; and

(f) if not, the reasons for such an *ad-hoc* approach was?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir. The news-item appeared in India Today of March 27, 2000.

(b) and (c) The signing of MOU between IU Net Inc. USA and Secretary, Department of Telecom, on October 16, 1998 was reported to the full Telecom Commission in its meeting held on November, 11, 1998.

In another meeting of the Full Telecom Commission (14-7-1999), which reviewed the progress of implementation of New Services, it was observed by the Commission that implementation of Sankhya Vahini Project should be expedited.

(d) to (f) The project does not envisage any leasing or handing over of fibres. Rather it envisages developing a high speed data network in which contribution from Department of Telecom Services (DTS) to its share of equity of the Joint Venture will be partly by way of transfer of dark fibres to the proposed Joint Venture. In the instant case, the Task Force has identified the possible partner in developing the high speed data network after broad based discussions and consultations.

**Freezing of MTNL Accounts**

45S8. SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY:
SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) how were the recent freezing and defreezing of MTNL accounts necessitated;

(b) what is the present position in this regard; and

(c) whether the episode does not betray lack of coordination between two important Ministries of the Central Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) The freezing of MTNL accounts by IT authorities on 24.3.2000 was not necessary as MTNL has been a regular tax payer, has paid tax of Rs. 4841 crores during its existence until 31st March, 2000, and has never defaulted. In the case of Licence Fee paid to the DOT by MTNL, however, Income Tax Authorities have earlier allowed it as a tax deductible business expense but subsequently reversed their stand. They disallowed Licence Fees as a business expense for the